

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—Tuesday, July 31, 2001

The House met at 9 a.m.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2001, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 25 minutes, and each Member except the majority leader, the minority leader or the minority whip limited to not to exceed 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate extend beyond 9:50 a.m.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) for 5 minutes.

SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S ENERGY PLAN

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I recently heard a member of the Committee on Resources make an interesting statement. This individual said that the United States currently has only 3 percent of the known oil reserves in the world. The truth is that we really do not know. We do not know whether it has 3 percent or 5 percent or 15 percent or 20 percent, because for the last 10, 15, 20 years we have done absolutely no exploration. We have had no energy plan.

Mr. Speaker, think about what corporation, what military unit, what athletic team would proceed without a plan and without knowing what its assets were. This is precisely what we have done here in the United States.

I would really encourage people to support the President's energy plan because, number one, it provides a blueprint where there has been none, a plan of action that provides conservation practices and development of alternative fuels. It also provides for exploration which allows us to know what our assets and limitations are. In the event of an international crisis, it will be critical that we know what is there.

SUPPORT FOR A DAY OF DEMOCRACY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PENCE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this morning the Ford-Carter

Commission on Election Reform will release its report. One of the striking aspects of its report, and I say striking because it is sometimes rare for commissions to study an issue and offer to give the American people another day off; but I believe this is an important step in acknowledging the very important and pivotal role that the American people play in fostering democracy in this Nation. That is the election of the President of the United States, election of their Federal officials that come about in one group every 4 years. The President, in many instances, Senators and, of course, Members of the House of Representatives are running for reelection.

The Ford-Carter Commission was to assess the plight of elections in this Nation. Certainly a laboratory was the election of November 2000. Not only was Florida a prime example where things can go wrong, but as I traveled around the country listening to voters in many many jurisdictions, this is a problem that is systemic to our Nation and one that we must fix in order to enhance democracy.

We must ensure that every voter has a right to vote. We must ensure that they are knowledgeable about where to vote. We have to ensure that voters are not purged from the list that is kept by their local governmental officials. We must ensure that voters are educated on how to vote and that they are able to utilize high technology equipment.

There are many legislative initiatives that are fostering or looking to improve the election system. I support the Dodd-Conyers legislation and I have offered legislation myself to determine the best technology that this Nation should use.

Many jurisdictions who have the resources have already begun to improve their election system. We must keep in mind, however, that the rush to judgment to improve our election system should not replace one bad system with another. So it is imperative that we create standards and I hope the Ford-Carter commission includes that.

I have a bill, H.R. 934, that has spoken to the issue of a national holiday.

Why a national holiday? One more day for us to be in the shopping malls? I think not. A day that everyone can focus on their most important responsibility, and that is the maintenance of democracy in this Nation, the upkeep of the Constitution. This will allow college students and high school students and working people from all walks of life to participate in a day of democracy. That is what we should call it.

My bill, H.R. 934, says it is a sense of Congress that private employers in the United States should give their employees a day off on the Tuesday next, after the first Monday in November in 2004 and each fourth year thereafter to enable the employees to cast votes in the presidential and other elections held on that day.

But, more importantly, we will not hear of the young mother or the young father or the hard-working individual who says, I just did not get the time to vote. I tried to get back to my polling place, but it was closed. Traffic kept me from voting. Transportation kept me from voting. My employer would not let me have time off to vote.

College students who might want to be poll workers at the polls, a most important responsibility on that day, knowing the laws, assisting people in exercising their democratic right, having those kinds of poll workers assist us along with other professionals as well as the wonderful volunteers we have had to date.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is high time for us to be able to give the kind of credible evidence and the kind of respect for the election system that is long overdue in this Nation. There are many countries around the world that fight for the meager chance to cast their vote. There are many that do not have that chance. There are others who look to us for our leadership and many countries have had us as election monitors.

We can do no less for our citizens than to ensure that every vote counts, to ensure that we have a working system that allows every vote to count, to respect the military votes, to respect those who have done their time in prisons and now want to be the kind of citizens that will have their rights restored, to respect those who have registered and yet now are purged.

There are many things we can do to fix the election system. But I believe one that we can all rally around is the Ford-Carter commission. As I said, this national holiday will not be a shopping day. It will be a day of freedom, a day that we will recognize that every single American goes to the polls acknowledging and respecting our democracy.

When our men and women offer themselves for the ultimate sacrifice in the United States military, they do so so that freedom will reign. Support H.R. 934 as we move to the process of enhancing democracy in this Nation.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

CELEBRATING THE CITY OF THOMASVILLE'S 150TH BIRTHDAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, the city of Thomasville, North Carolina, will celebrate its 150th birthday in 2002.

When one thinks of Thomasville, there are many things that come to mind: Thomasville Furniture Industries, the Big Chair, the Baptist Children's Orphanage, Everybody's Day, textiles, and high school football.

Thomasville was named for State Senator John W. Thomas, who helped pioneer the construction of the first railroad across North Carolina and, in 1852, created the town of Thomasville around the hustle and bustle of the State's first railroad. In 1857, Thomas finally obtained a charter for the town from the North Carolina General Assembly.

The town of Thomasville grew rapidly with wooden household furniture manufacturing becoming the mainstay of the local economy. Eventually, Thomasville became known as "The Chair Town" due to the fact that the products that the Thomasville Chair Company, which eventually became Thomasville Furniture Industries, were almost exclusively simple, sturdy, straight-back chairs.

Today, Thomasville remains an international center for furniture manufacturing; and Thomasville Furniture Industries, its leading manufacturer, has made the name Thomasville known around the globe.

In 1922, in an effort to take advantage of its reputation as "The Chair Town," Thomasville Chair Company erected a gigantic chair in the middle of the town square. The project kept three men working 20 hours a day for 1 week and took the same amount of lumber that would have been required to construct 100 ordinary chairs.

Unfortunately, after 15 years of exposure, the local chair was torn down in 1936. Due to the Depression and the advent of World War II, another chair was not built until 1948. In 1948, once again, Thomasville Chair Company spearheaded the effort to construct another chair, and a decision was made to construct a chair that would stand the test of time.

The concrete chair was a reproduction of the original Duncan Phyfe armchair. Today, the monument stands almost 30 feet high and overlooks the downtown square. In addition to the chair, downtown Thomasville is home to North Carolina's oldest railroad depot which today houses the Thomasville Visitors Center.

Another one of Thomasville's significant contributions is its commitment to the Mills Home Baptist Children's

Orphanage, the largest orphanage in the South outside of Texas. The orphanage provides a wide array of very important children's services to the local and State communities.

One of the longest held traditions in Thomasville, Mr. Speaker, is Everybody's Day. We continue to observe it. The first Everybody's Day Festival was held in Thomasville in 1908 and is North Carolina's oldest festival.

In 1910, the Amazon Cotton Mill, one of the Cannon chain of textile mills, opened its doors as did the Jewell cotton mills that same year. Jewell was a result of investments contributed by local investors in the community. Both these mills served as a catalyst for what would become a very vibrant industry, which still exists today.

Last, but certainly not least, Thomasville is home to a long and rich high school football tradition, a tradition of champions begun under the days of Coach George Cushwa, a beloved coach and teacher. In fact, the current football stadium bears his name. Under Cushwa's tutelage emerged an individual in whom many place their hopes for continued success. This man, Coach Allen Brown, did not let the fans down.

Leading the Bulldogs to several State champions and guiding them through the maze of several conference realignments, he was always able to keep his team focused and the fans engaged, continuing in the great tradition of his predecessor.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the Bulldogs are led by yet another great leader and former quarterback, Benjie Brown, who follows in the footsteps of his dad, Allen Brown, and Coach Cushwa.

Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, Thomasville is a vibrant city whose future looms bright, and it is truly an honor for me to be able to recognize this fine city, the Chair Capital of the World on the House floor and wish it well as it begins its celebration for its 150th birthday next year.

TAKING ANOTHER LOOK AT SPRING VALLEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this morning's editorial in the Washington Post calls for a second look at Spring Valley. This is the area in an exclusive residential neighborhood in Washington, D.C., immediately adjacent to the American University campus, that was 83 years ago the site of American chemical weapons testing and production during World War I. It is one of over 1,000 sites across America where we have unexploded ordnance, military toxins, environmental waste left from the past.

I could not agree more with the Washington Post that it is time for a second look at what is happening in Spring Valley.

Last spring, the gentlewoman from Washington, D.C., (Ms. NORTON) and I led a group of media and concerned citizens to visit the site where we have saw the areas of the concentration of arsenic, the vacant child care center that had many, many times the level of recommended contaminants before it was vacated, that now stands empty where just a few months ago there were young children.

Or looking at the back yard of the Korean Ambassador that is all scratched away where they are trying even now after the second cleanup to finish the job.

Yes, it is time for a second look at the Spring Valley situation to see what happened, who knew the information, to see if people were adequately warned of the dangers. But I think there is a much larger issue here than the management of the Spring Valley site.

As I mentioned, this is one of over 1,000 sites across the country. Indeed, it is hard to find a congressional district that does not have at least one of these situations that is there dealing with a potential threat to the local environment.

It is important that Congress not be missing in action with the issue of unexploded ordnance, which has claimed 65 lives that we have known of, perhaps more, where we have no real understanding of how many thousands, how many hundreds of thousands indeed. Indeed, the estimates are that it could be as many as 50 million acres that are contaminated.

Until Congress gets on top of this issue, I fear that we are going to be putting the Department of Defense in a situation where, with an inadequate budget, they are given no choice but to go from hot spot to hot spot, from the focus of emergency from the media, political pressure or some other contingency forces their attention.

A much better approach is for us to take a comprehensive look. I would suggest that my colleagues join me in cosponsoring H.R. 2605, the Ordnance and Explosive Risk Management Act that calls for the identification of a single person who is in charge. Right now there is not a single point of contact.

It calls for increased work in terms of research so that we know how best to clean up these sites, that we do a comprehensive inventory so at least we know how big the problem is. Of course, we all need to make sure that we are adequately funding this problem.

People who followed this in the news noticed that American University has filed suit against the United States Government for almost \$100 million in damages.